

A Time To Come (Part II) by MsMrs

Series: A Time To Come [2]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Family Reunions, Mild Hurt/Comfort, Multi, New Years

Language: English

Characters: Eleven | Jane Hopper, Holly Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Child Character(s), Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Holly Wheeler & Everyone, Holly Wheeler & Karen Wheeler, Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-03-21

Updated: 2018-04-02

Packaged: 2022-04-21 15:33:48

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 4

Words: 4,361

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The year 2002. The Hopper/Byers/Wheeler families reunite in Hawkins, to celebrate New Year's Eve, remembering times long gone.

Holly Wheeler hadn't planned to spend New Year's with her family, but suddenly, she desperately needs them.

1. December 29th, 2002

Author's Note:

Yay, I'm actually continuing! As it looks now, this part is gonna be pretty short. Don't know what I'm going to incorporate. I just wanted to write for adult Holly a bit. Guess what, she's an angry punk musician!

Look at yourself. Crying like a baby. Not so strong and independent now, are you?

Heading north on I-65, Holly Wheeler was really testing out her old Civic's limits. It hadn't been brand new when her brother Mike had bought it in 1990, and by the time he had sold it to her, shortly after her seventeenth birthday and the birth of his daughter, it had already run half the distance to the moon. Five years later, it still didn't show any signs of giving in, though. As it wasn't a particularly powerful engine, she couldn't get the speedometer past eighty, no matter how hard she tried, and eighty was barely enough to express her rage.

Rage! That's it. You're not crying, you're fucking boiling on the inside. Turn around! Turn around now and kick him in the balls!

But Holly didn't. She only gnashed her teeth when she passed Nashville, but didn't take the opportunity. She was only vaguely aware of the fact that there could be cops, and that she could get in trouble for speeding. Every sense of reason in her had been temporarily overridden. Really temporarily? She had felt like this for hours. In Atlanta, she had just packed a few necessary things, then set the radio, that was now blasting Slayer, to full volume, and put the pedal to the floor.

Just as I thought. You don't have the guts. Running back to mommy every time something doesn't go as planned, eh?

„Shut the fuck up... shut the fuck up...“ she hissed so quietly, she couldn't hear her own voice over the radio. Holly rolled down the window. For a second, she was overwhelmed by the cold December air, wearing only a shirt, and over that her olive field-jacket with the lining removed, stuffed somewhere in a duffel bag in the backseat. Her fingerless gloves didn't help a lot either. She took a few deep breaths, feeling the calming effect the stinging cold had on her almost immediately. It was three in the morning, the road was empty. The fact that it was dark, and the snow that lay piled up by the sides of the road got her thinking, at least a bit. She eased off the accelerator a tad, dropping to sixty, but only until she reached for the radio. Her wrist with a silver bracelet came into view, and something in her mind snapped again. She floored it once more, before grabbing hold of the delicate bracelet with her left index finger, ripping it off. In retrospect, Holly hadn't liked it anyways. She should have taken it as a hint as to how little he had understood her. She growled like a lion when she dropped it out of the open window. After that, it was back to sixty, which she now considered plenty fast enough for a pitch black stretch of road in the middle of the winter. She wanted to reach Hawkins alive, after all.

2. December 29th, 2002 (II)

Notes for the Chapter:

I had two chapters ready anyways. :P

Steve Harrington ran his fingers through his hair, yawning into the silence of the car. It was barely eight in the morning, too early to be out on patrol, but that was the job he had chosen, so complaining would have felt hypocritical. Having reached the outskirts of town, he decided for a coffee break. Coffee and contemplation. He couldn't possibly know how many times he had heard Hopper saying these words, and only now, in his mid-thirties, he was beginning to understand. Ten years earlier, getting up and getting to work full of energy and enthusiasm hadn't been a problem for him. Now, that he was closing in on the inevitable mid-life crisis, that was a different story, though. He parked to police cruiser behind the cheesy old *Welcome to Hawkins* sign that hadn't been updated since the late eighties, and poured himself a small cup of coffee from his thermos, already relishing the energy it promised by the smell. Right as he was preparing to take a sip though, a car that passed the city limits at breakneck speed startled him. For only a split second, a conflict arose in Steve. There was no doubt, his job required him to step in. What about the coffee, though? Back in the thermos? Would take too long. Out the window? Waste of good coffee. Steve immediately regretted the decision of downing it in one drag, but there was no time to cry. With tears dwelling in his eyes, he started the engine, and pressed the button for his emergency lights. He felt no need to disturb the good citizens of Hawkins with a siren that early in the morning. Thankfully, it didn't take long for the black Civic to pull over. Steve parked the cruiser in close proximity, grabbed his hat from the passenger seat, and then neared the car. His trained eye began analyzing at once. Georgia license plate, mid-eighties, few scratches and bumps, one rear light not working, rust on the wheels, probably owned by a young guy. Knocking on the window, he scanned the environment for a second. The streets of the residential area were empty, no one had been put in danger. Lazily, he turned his gaze down toward the driver's side window, that was just being rolled down. A young woman looked up to him in silence. He hadn't

expected that, but decided to pull through with the routine. His burned tongue almost killed him, when he sighed

„Ma‘am, you got any idea how fast you were...“

It was only now that he recognized her. No wonder he hadn‘t earlier. Her blond hair with green streaks in it stood up in every direction, giving her the look of a homeless punk. She strangely reminded him of his first encounter with the girl then known as ‚Eleven‘, even though the similarities weren‘t apparent at first glance. It was more about the vibe that surrounded her. The dark eyeliner, her slightly too big army jacket and the black, fingerless gloves further underlined what was presumably a ‚Fuck the police‘ attitude. Steve knew better, though. She was an easy to anger, but ultimately likable, person.

„God dammit, Holly.“ he grunted. „The hell are you thinking?“

„Right now, I‘m thinking your voice sounds fucked.“ she snapped.

„Your fault. Your shenanigans forced me to down my piping hot coffee too quickly.“ He extended his tongue, and hissed „Does this look like third degree burns to you? If it does, I‘m putting you in jail.“

„You‘re gonna be fine.“ she said, now a lot softer. „Look, Steve I‘m...“

„...don‘t wanna hear it, Miss Wheeler.“ he brushed it off. „I‘m letting you off with a warning. Because it‘s you, because you‘re not looking too good, and because I‘m not in the mood for paperwork. You

headed to Hop's house to meet up with the family?“

„Actually, I was going to my mom's. But yeah, I guess that means I'm gonna join them eventually.“

„Stick to the speed limit until there, will you? By the way, your hair looks bitchin'.“

He really thought that was a compliment, considering how much of a punk and sometimes metalhead Holly was, but she stared at him like he was talking gibberish. After a second, he jerked the rearview mirror in her direction and groaned

„What the fuck?“

„So, that's not how it should look?“

Her reaction made Steve wonder how she had made it from Atlanta to here in one piece, and without any bite marks in her steering wheel. She all but exploded, her head turning so red, it was close to comical. Under constant cursing, occasionally hitting the wheel with a fist, she tried to flatten her hair, and finally managed to get it into somewhat decent shape. Through her frantic muttering, Steve understood, she had been driving with the window open for a while, for whatever reason. It wasn't hard to tell, she was in a terrible condition, and telling her about her broken rear light could really set her off again. Instead, he produced his notebook, scribbled 'Your left rear light is broken' on a piece of paper, folded it crudely, and handed it to her.

„I'm gonna escort you to your mom's, and you have to promise not to read the note until you've calmed yourself. Either that, or I'm taking

your keys away right now and you can pick up your car tomorrow.”

Holly wordlessly ripped the note from Steve’s hand, and slipped it in her pocket. The drive to Karen’s house took only five minutes, but Steve gladly took that precaution, even if it was only for Holly’s sake. He had never seen her that on edge before.

3. December 29th, 2002 (III)

Holly parked her Civic in the driveway to her mother's house, watching Steve stop the police cruiser near the curb. She decided that, since she hadn't been exactly nice, she should at least say goodbye. With the duffel bag in hand and her guitar bag hanging from one shoulder, she approached him.

„Thanks for letting me of the hook, I guess.“ she mumbled.

Holly was never quick to apologize, mainly because she knew exactly, and sometimes was ashamed of, how quick-tempered she was. To her relief, Steve didn't insist on hearing the details.

„Don't mention it.“ he simply said. „Just remember, any other time of year, I wouldn't be as indulgent. Remember the note.“

She was still a bit puzzled about the little piece of paper he had handed her minutes earlier, but she decided to stick to what he had told her. It was probably more bad news, and she needed none of that right now. The simple fact that Steve seemed to think it could wait a few hours though, made the prospect of it more bearable.

„Thanks. Bye, Steve. Happy new year.“

He tipped his hat in response, then took off. There was nothing left to do for Holly to walk up to the door, and ring the bell. She sincerely hoped her mother was home. Otherwise, she'd have to go to Hopper's house and talk to everyone at once. Not what she wanted right now. Even after driving for more than eight hours, she was still a kettle that was just waiting to boil over. It took a while, and she was beginning to lose hope, when her mother finally opened.

„Hi, mom.“ she muttered with a pained grin.

What followed, was a typical Karen-Wheeler-Family-Welcome.

„Holly!“ she all but squeaked. „I wasn‘t expecting you.“

Holly felt herself pulled into a hug that she knew would last forever. Her mom hadn‘t even commented on the state she was in. Steve had noticed immediately. Like she had anticipated, Karen‘s face dropped a little when she let go, and inspected her daughter more carefully.

„Something‘s wrong.“

„Well, duh...“ Holly huffed. „Can I maybe come inside first? It‘s freezing and I‘ve been driving for...“

„...eight hours. Or more!“ her mother said matter-of-factly. „I‘m so sorry, sweetie! Come inside. I‘ve just made tea.“

She followed her over the doorstep of the small house Karen had been living in since the divorce. Holly could barely remember the house they had lived in when she was small child, but what she remembered wasn‘t all that pleasant. It hadn‘t been warm, or comfortable, or much of a home at all. Unlike this place. It wasn‘t as roomy, sure, but what, above all else, made it so welcoming, was the simple fact that Ted Wheeler had never been here. Still, she had to ask, because in all honesty, he had never done anything exactly bad. He had just been there without really being there, and then left one day.

„Heard anything from Ted?“

Her mom put on a frown that said it all, but answered

„You know I haven‘t. Mike and Nancy don‘t even ask anymore, and I don‘t try.“ Her face softened, when she added „Sorry, that came out wrong, honey. I‘m so sorry he doesn‘t...“

„Forget it.“ Holly sighed. „That was the last time I‘ve asked, promise.“

Her mother pushed her towards the living room couch, where she sat her down.

„Just a second.“ she hummed, scurrying off to the kitchen.

Moments later, she returned with a can of what Holly presumed the tea she had mentioned, and two mugs. Holly gratefully accepted it. She knew quite a lot of people who‘d laugh at the sight of her, sitting on a comfy sofa next to her mom with hot tea and streaks of eyeliner on her cheeks.

„Now, tell me what‘s going on.“ Karen demanded, but in the soft way of a supportive mother. „That eyeliner wasn‘t supposed to look like that.“

Something weird happened, something, Holly only ever let happen around a very select crowd of people, including her mom, Mike, Nancy, El, and her best friend Jodie. The energies she usually directed towards her trademark temper burst out of her, after suppressing them for hours. She immediately felt how unhealthy that had been. Karen was quick to jump up from her armchair, sit down right beside Holly, and put both arms around her. She didn‘t put on any more pressure, letting Holly weep for a while, and god, did she need that. You can only channel negative emotions into angry punk rock for so long, before it‘s not enough to get rid of them, and the

wave breaks and rolls back, and if you're not careful, it goes back and forth, back and forth, until it turns into what architects or engineers might call a 'resonance catastrophe'. With Jodie in Washington for the holidays, there had been no one in Atlanta to talk to. At least no one Holly was comfortable enough with. Now, that she had finally reached home, there was no reason, and no possible way anyways, to hold back anymore. Holly Wheeler let the tears roll for minutes, unashamed, and maybe even enjoying it in a weird way.

„It's about Marcus.“ she finally sniffled. „It's... it's over...“

She nearly felt childish for crying like that over a breakup. It hadn't even been her first one, but seeing her mother's understanding face was more than enough to swipe the doubts away.

„What happened?“ she quietly asked, and Holly felt, it wasn't just something she said out of courtesy.

„He... cheated.“ she pressed through her teeth, after a while. „Saw him.“

It hurt. It really did. Just to think that she hadn't told anyone until now, made her head swirl. All of a sudden, she couldn't remember any details of her lengthy car ride, or her encounter with Steve. Sure, these things had happened, but it felt like she had just inherited blurry memories from an entirely different person.

„How am I still alive?“ she said, more to herself, but Karen picked up on it.

„Exactly, young lady.“ she scolded. „You spent eight hours on the road, in no condition to drive. But let's not talk about that. It looks

like you're feeling better already.“

„I do.“ Holly said truthfully. „He's just such a... such a...“

There it was. That righteous anger she wanted to feel. It was so vastly different from the desperate rage of the last hours, just by allowing her to feel some amount of joy again. The only reason why she didn't complete her sentence in the usual manner was, that her mother was sitting next to her. There she was, Holly Wheeler, used to swearing on the stage, in front of a hundred or more people, but unable to say ,shithead‘ in her mom's presence. It seriously made her laugh.

„What's so funny?“ Karen huffed joyfully. „Suddenly remembered I'm not one of your punk friends? Well, I got news for you, I think he's a piece of shit too. I told you in the beginning.“

„I wanted to say ,shithead‘.“ Holly admitted under her breath.

„A total f...“ her mother started, but Holly quickly slapped a hand on her mouth, shutting her up.

„Watch out, mom!“ she yelped. „It's Sunday, and you wanna be able to look Father Thomas in the eyes, don't you?“

„Okay... okay...“ her mom mumbled. „You're right. You're not coming, then?“

„Haven't been to church since I left.“ Holly shrugged. „Don't need

that in my life.“

„Seems like, none of my children do. I‘m gonna drop you off at Hop‘s and Joyce‘s place, and join you guys later then. You‘ll have to stay here over night, they‘re full. And please, never try to cover up cigarette smoke with deodorant again.“

Karen‘s tone didn‘t allow for Holly to talk back, but it wasn‘t really supposed to be a scolding anyways. It was more like her way of saying ‚Don‘t think about him anymore, let‘s get back to normal‘. While it was a little early for Holly to go back to normal, she could at least imagine having a bit of fun again. After all, New Year‘s Eve with the family should be fun. Thinking about it now, she was looking forward to seeing everyone.

4. March 5th, 1988

Notes for the Chapter:

Who's ready for El being somewhat of a big sister for Holly? 'cause that's what's happening here.

El Hopper enjoyed driving at night. It was calming. Even satisfying to some degree. Being left alone with your thoughts for a few hours could be relief, as much as she loved everyone in her life. All she could see was a stretch of highway illuminated by the headlights of Mike's old Ford Torino, as well as the red taillights of Joyce Byers' relatively new Pontiac. All she could hear was her boyfriend's soft snoring. He would probably take over soon. El had been behind the wheel for four hours straight, and they still had more than six hours to go. The fuel gauge was nearing empty, so it was finally time to look for a gas station. Keeping one hand on the wheel, and both eyes on the road, El reached over to the reclined passenger seat, and poked Mike's ribs gently, but firm enough to wake him up.

„Huh? We there?“ he slurred, before his eyes snapped open. „Want me to take over?“

„Soon.“ El said. „We're almost out of gas. Could you...“

„I'm on it.“ Mike brought the Supercom up to his mouth, pressed the talk button, and asked „Mom, are you awake over there?“ A short silence followed, but El knew, it was probably just Karen fumbling to get the radio to work. Technology wasn't exactly her pair of shoes.

„I'm here.“ her voice finally came crackling through the small speaker. „Do you need a break?“

„We need gas. And while we’re at it, I’m gonna take the wheel.“ Again, silence. Mike and El waited patiently, until his mother said

„There’s a gas station coming up ten miles ahead. Let’s stop there.“

„Sounds good. Uh... one more thing, mom.“ El could sense Mike’s grin without seeing it. „Do you still think these are useless toys?“ After a while, Will picked up the radio, and now, El was grinning as well.

„Some people just can’t admit defeat.“ In the background, El heard Joyce attempting to scold her son, being cut off by Karen laughing „Alright, alright, I admit it, they’re not toys, and taking them was a wise decision.“

El pulled into the empty gas station, right behind Joyce. Against the darkness that surrounded them, it stood out like an island of flickering neon light. Every now and then, a car or a truck passed by. Otherwise, it was eerily silent. They seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, but then again, at three in the morning, most places seem like the middle of nowhere. The air outside wasn’t any colder than inside the car. El had kept the heater turned off in fear of getting too comfortable and sleepy. Exhaustion was pulling on her by now. Before they had left Hawkins shortly before midnight, she had only

slept two or three hours. Mike had already began filling up the tank when she got to her feet.

„Got enough money?“ she asked, approaching him. Instead of Mike, Karen answered from where she was standing next to Joyce and Will.

„It’s a family trip. Gas is on me.“ Mike’s always humble ways almost caused him to protest, but El decided to nudge his shoulder hard enough to make him stop before he could even say a word.

„Don’t be stupid.“ she hissed. „You’re gonna have to pay for ice cream and candy.“

„I’m getting coffee.“ Joyce declared. „Anyone want something?“

„That would be a dream come true.“ Mike sighed loud enough for her to hear it. In the end, El was the only one who didn’t want coffee. She needed sleep. Otherwise, she wouldn’t be able to enjoy New York in the morning.

„Have an eye on Holly, will you?“ Karen shouted over her shoulder, before she followed Joyce into the small store. That was enough to wake up the seven year old in the backseat of Joyce’s car. As with every child her age, her first question was a cranky „Are we there yet?“ El slid into the back next to her.

„Six more hours to go.“ she sighed. „Sorry, Waffles.“ Holly’s pout turned into a frown.

„Waffles?“

„Because I wanna eat you.“ El grinned, making the little girl squeak by tickling her a bit. After that, though, she was back to pouting, and El could understand her just too well.

„It's boring with mom and Mrs. Byers.“ she complained. „I wanna go with you and Mikey.“ At that, Mike leaned into the car a bit.

„Tell you what, Holly.“ he said in his big-brother-Mike voice El adored somehow. „I wanna make the rest of the way without another stop, so El's gonna take you to the bathroom. In the meantime, I try to talk to mom. Maybe she'll let you ride in my terribly dangerous car just this once. Deal?“ Before Holly said a word, El knew what was coming.

„Don't have to go.“ she said, crossing her arms in front of her chest. What a stubborn child she was. Looking at Mike's pleading eyes, El took pity on him, and tried to muster a fearful expression.

„But Holly!“ she yelped. „I really have to go, and the bathroom's out back. I think I'm gonna be too scared of the dark without you!“ Technically, that was a lie. El was by no means scared of the dark anymore. A few years ago, she would have shivered at the thought of going into a dark room, or outside at night. Not anymore, though, thanks to countless hours of self-therapy, and the best friends and family she could wish for. She knew that Holly knew, she wasn't serious. It was just that, making a game of everything always managed to convince Holly, and to be honest, El loved that about her boyfriend's sister. To her satisfaction, Holly put on a face that

couldn't have looked more determined. She wiggled out of the seatbelt of her safety seat.

„Let's go!“ she said, already halfway across El's lap. El let the little girl lead the way towards where the bathroom-sign was pointing, all while pretending to shiver with fear. That just seemed to make Holly grow more courageous. The bathroom itself wasn't so much scary as it was disgusting, and before she allowed Holly to sit down and do her business, El used up half a roll of toilet paper to cover up the filthy seat as best as she could. After that, she turned around, letting Holly do her business, which was more than necessary, apparently. That nice little victory for El and Mike was quickly followed by another one, for Holly. Karen Wheeler was standing there, arms crossed, a paper cup of coffee in one hand, while Mike was already working on fixing Holly's seat in the back of his car. Due to the lack of seatbelts in the rear seats, Mike always brought a few straps for these occasions. The girl's eyes lightened up like the sun.

„Looks like you're getting to ride where the less boring people are, Waffles.“

„Excuse me?“ she heard Will from the driver's seat of his mother's car, coffee almost empty already.

„Doesn't include you.“ El rolled her eyes.

„So that means you're leaving me with the boring people?“ At that, she shrugged, but mirroring his sarcastic grin.

So much for sleeping. That was out of the question now, with a somewhat well rested seven year old in the car. After Mike had mercifully given half of his coffee to El, she was reasonably awake though. Even without it, Holly would have made sure to keep her up and going. She babbled about this and that, friends at school, arguments she got into, the times she emerged victorious from fights, and how her mother had unfairly scolded her for it.

„How about we put on some music, huh?“ El finally asked. With a glance at the cassette player Mike had screwed into the dashboard and connected to the car’s speakers, she added „Still surprised this thing even works.“ Mike huffed, straightening up in his seat.

„You’ve got the president of the Hawkins High School A/V Club in front of you.“ he said in a too dignified manner. When El pressed Play and nothing happened, Mike slapped down his hand on the cassette player hard, making it go.

„Your mixtape?“ Mike shouted over the sound of Bad Religion.
„Doesn’t sound like Will.“

„Yeah!“ El answered from the backseat, where she was sitting next to Holly. „Just wait for the real stuff.“ Over the past few years, she had developed a taste in music that, in some ways, contradicted Hopper’s, but she couldn’t remember the two ever clashing because of it. She had never heard anything like ‚Turn that noise down‘. El knew when

to use headphones. Will did too. For example, late at night. The only exception was, of course, the car. Another reason why she loved driving. Next to El, Holly was pretending to drum along to the song. She caught Mike's gaze in the mirror. His voice rang in her ears, when he thought ,I think you've started something there.'

When Iron Maiden came on, and Holly began singing along, making up the lyrics when she couldn't understand them, El knew, he was right.

Author's Note:

You're in for a few short chapters. Again, I don't know how far I'm actually gonna take this.